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ABSTRACT

The Career Planning for Life Forum was a national policy forum sponsored by the Committee for Economic Development (CED) and hosted by the U.S. Army. More than 250 representatives of business, education, government, and labor attended the forum and spent the day discussing the preparation of the country's young work force for the global economy. Before the forum, the CED formed an advisory council that developed a list of eight guiding principles for successful life planning. These guiding principles were discussed along with the following topics: the importance of career planning and work experience during the teenage years; the increased importance of career planning in view of recent cultural changes that have not been accompanied by corresponding changes in the country's educational paradigm; the importance of collaboration between the business and educational communities in the area of developing programs to prepare U.S. youth for successful careers; examples of successful career planning programs and the need for increased recognition of such programs; and the U.S. Army's new Planning for Life Recognition Program, which is designed to encourage all 50 states to help advance career planning by offering state- and national-level awards recognizing career planning initiatives for youth. (MN)

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Planning For Life: Career Planning Excellence in America, A National Policy Forum

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August 4, 1993: Forum
Summer 1994: Recognition Program

Sponsored by The Committee for Economic Development
Hosted by The United States Army

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PLANNING FOR LIFE:
CAREER PLANNING EXCELLENCE IN AMERICA,
A NATIONAL POLICY FORUM

AUGUST 4, 1993: FORUM SUMMER 1994: RECOGNITION PROGRAM

SPONSORED BY THE COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
HOSTED BY THE UNITED STATES ARMY

- America must recognize the need for more effective career planning. Without prompt action, we risk falling behind our global economic competitors.
- Extensive cooperation and collaboration between all sectors is necessary. This is especially so for business, education, labor and the military.
- School curricula must accommodate the teaching of career planning skills.
- There are some notable career planning programs in place. Many more are needed and programs of merit need to receive recognition. Today's successful programs must become the models for tomorrow.

These hypotheses were developed at a policy forum held August 4, 1993, at The National Defense University, in Washington, D.C. More than 250 representatives of business, education, government and labor attended and spent the day discussing life planning for America's youth.

This Planning for Life Forum was sponsored by the Committee for Economic Development (CED) and hosted by the United States Army.

CED is an independent, nonpartisan, non-profit organization devoted to policy research. The U.S. Army is a major employer of American youth and is dependent on a pool of highly-capable young people. Together, they brought representatives of business, education, government and labor together in a spirit of partnership. They met to discuss one of America's most pressing needs: preparing America's young workforce for the global economy. Given the unprecedented global competition now evident in business, it is critically important that all facets of the American economy work together to help America's youth compete and succeed.

The Army-CED Partnership

CED and the Army each have an interest in better preparing American youth for the challenges of adulthood and employment. Prior partnerships between the two organizations promoted discussion and examined the roles of the military and business in putting the skills of Army alumni to work in the civilian world.

In its role as the sponsor of the Planning for Life Forum, CED formed an advisory council of distinguished representatives of the business, education, government and labor communities. Prior to the Forum, these leaders developed a list of guiding principles for successful life planning:

- A career is a lifelong process of decision making and adapting to change — skills that can and must be instilled through teaching and positive examples.
- All Americans have the right to learn career planning skills to equip them for productive and purposeful work throughout life.
- Vocational education and college education are equally critical to creating a competitive American work force.
- Successful career planning is the shared responsibility of our schools, our employers, our communities, our parents, and our young people.
- Career planning integrated into the classroom empowers teachers, as well as guidance counselors, to stress the relevance of coursework to careers.
- Employers benefit by communicating their requirements to educators so that schools can prepare students for the realities of the work world.
- Parents and communities, inspired by integrated community commitment, take an active role in career planning by working closely with schools and industry to set priorities, provide role models, and develop programs applicable both locally and nationally.
- Students who willingly approach career planning as a lifelong process have a head start toward success in today's work environment.

The American business community needs to have access to workers who are prepared from the very outset to help it compete in an increasingly competitive global economy. Likewise, the Army needs to recruit individuals who are proficient at decision-making and technologically capable of handling high-tech equipment.

During the Planning for Life Forum, William D. Clark, acting assistant secretary of the Army, said, "The Army is a versatile national resource, not only for national security, but also for business, education and society. We are a large employer and we move a

great number of people through our system, all of whom, whether they serve one term or 20 years, will eventually return to society as productive citizens."

Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Carney, deputy chief of staff for personnel, U.S. Army, added: "Business is looking for exactly the product that we produce . . . young people who are self-disciplined, versatile, adaptable, who persevere, who have a strong work ethic and have learned to work together as a member of a team."

About 60 percent of the young soldiers recruited by the Army leave after their initial term of service. They join the work force with the skills that are necessary to compete in a high-tech environment or to attend college with up to $30,000 in college funds provided by the Montgomery GI Bill and the Army College Fund.

Career Planning: A Requirement for the 1990s

The Planning for Life Forum was intended to provide a base on which to build a better system for helping young people plan their careers and their lives more effectively, according to Charles O. Rossotti, CED trustee and chairman, American Management Systems, a computer systems and consulting firm.

"Both the sectors (business and the military) recruit legions of entry-level workers every year, either directly after high school or, increasingly, after some college or post-secondary training," said Mr. Rossotti. "If young people are better prepared to make the transition from school to work, our whole society will benefit," he added.

Dr. Andrew Hahn, professor and associate dean, Brandeis University's Heller Graduate School, noted in his keynote address that career planning is an issue that can no longer be ignored.

"We need more investment in career development, employment, education and training if for no other reason than there exists a huge gap between the standardized test scores of American young people and skills that corporations and business leaders tell us are needed for the work force of tomorrow," he said.

"Studies have been performed that look at the amount of training that young workers get every day in the unsubsidized, regular free economy. These studies reveal that only four percent of young American workers receive formal worksite based training. Clearly, we have a long way to go to connect education in the classroom with productive work in the employment sector," he added.

Discussing the necessity for young people to work while in high school, Dr. Hahn noted that work experience in the teenage years is overwhelmingly important for success in the early 20's.

He pointed out that wages tend to be higher for people who worked during their high school years. Without having worked during the high school years, the chance of attaining a successful career goes down incrementally, he said.

"By the age of 30, unemployment for most Americans gives way to a lack of careers. More than a third of American men aged 30 years old or younger have never held a job for more than a year. This is not an unemployment problem, because they may be moving in and out of short-term jobs. But they are not accumulating human capital, benefits, pension statements and the like. None of that is accruing for them because they lack careers," said Dr. Hahn.

"Career planning needs society's immediate focus. It also needs to be addressed differently. True career planning cannot exist without the dual education that exists in many of our trading countries," he added.

"Such dual work and education systems have a built in synergy so what you learn in the classroom is reinforced by what you learn in the workplace . . . . There must be a work/learning connection," he said.

This same idea was echoed by Ann M. Vogel, assistant general supervisor, configuration control, Baltimore Gas and Electric (BG&E) Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Plant. BG&E has a unique school-to-work program that allows students to work as clerical assistants, drafting and engineering technicians. The school system is informed about the educational background that employees need in the particular industry.

As a part of its involvement in developing school curricula, BG&E employees work with local educators to decide what a student needs to study in his or her high school years to maximize the effectiveness of the tech prep program.

"The schools were soon more focused on employer needs, not what the school system thought the work needs were. That type of partnership between schools and businesses really does better prepare the student for the workforce," Ms. Vogel said.

Changing Culture

Career planning is critical today because our emphasis on education must change as global competition becomes more fierce.

"Seventy-five percent of America's young people do not earn a college degree, yet today's typical high school education is still geared toward the college-bound student — not the majority who go directly into the work force," according to Dr. Pat Schwallie-Giddis, associate executive director, American Counseling Association. Many of the attendees voiced similar opinions.

An overriding theme of the Forum was: while society has changed drastically during the last thirty years, our educational paradigm remained the same. As a result, immediate change is needed with regard to cooperation between the educational, business and military communities.

The situation will not rectify itself simply through economic recovery. Rather, economic recovery should be a by-product of changes in the priorities of the labor, business and education sectors.

The Importance of Collaboration

While educators shoulder the burden to prepare young Americans for successful careers, the business community must tell the educational community what skills are needed.

The role of education is vital, but the education community cannot act alone to solve the problems facing America today. Without the cooperation and counsel of business, education is a boat without a rudder. It constantly moves but without a sense of direction.

Nancy Perry, Los Angeles bureau chief, *Fortune Magazine*, stressed, "The public must be made to understand that job training and academics are not mutually exclusive. To the contrary, many people learn their academic subjects better in a context they can understand. Quality vocational programs can motivate students to stay in school and go on to college by providing marketable skills and giving a purpose to learning.

"Business must do a better job of telling schools what will most be in demand in the future and provide more meaningful workplace experiences. When it comes to giving students actual experience in the workplace, companies are falling short."

Richard Kazis, a vice president of Jobs for The Future, a multi-year effort to advance knowledge and practice of school-to-work transition programs for young Americans, supported this view. "A fundamental reorientation of how learning is delivered needs to occur so that formal schooling has far more learning opportunities delivered through a practical hands-on approach," he said. "Business must be involved early and intensively so schools can use the business community's knowledge of local labor markets, and what employers want to shape the curriculum."

William Bloomfield, executive director, Center for Corporate and Education Initiatives (CCEI), agreed. He cited a recent CCEI survey of middle school students in three school districts which found that nearly 30 percent feel class materials are not relevant to their lives.

"Math, science and language arts do not exist in isolation except in schools. It is the context that brings these subjects to life. Math is used by carpenters, chefs, professional

athletes. Language-arts skills are what journalists, business managers and air traffic controllers use every day. That is what turns these kids on, but they cannot make these school/career connections on their own," he said.

Programs That Work

Planning for Life Forum participants discussed successful programs currently helping young Americans prepare for their futures.

"The BG&E involvement with the tech prep program in Calvert County represents a significant step toward promoting the creative thinking and technical expertise of all the students in the county," said Ms. Vogel. "It emphasizes the need to provide educational programs to move students into the labor force with marketable skills. That truly is one of the keys, that skills learned are marketable."

Other promising initiatives were discussed by William Bloomfield, who is the director of Futures 2000 (CCEI national pilot program), a program dealing with issues involving the success of low-income and disadvantaged students in obtaining higher education and career opportunities.

"In Portland, Maine, students worked on conserving and managing marine resources as part of a five-week lesson plan dealing with the environment. This involved fishermen, the Portland Waste Facility, The Audubon Society, parents and others whose careers and lives are touched in some way by the marine and environmental industry."

Like the Calvert Cliffs program, these efforts illustrate the cooperation of diverse groups needed to bring about successful career planning programs.

Mr. Bloomfield also discussed another lesson from Futures 2000 where local business people in Junction City, Kansas, were asked to demonstrate how school lessons pertain to the real world and careers. Teachers of middle school math, science, and social studies teamed up to teach lessons on graphs. They then had the community and business leaders come in to teach students how graphs are used in their professions. Efforts like this help every student relate to math in an applied way.

Mr. Bloomfield also described how young people in one of the Futures 2000 programs in New Mexico decided they wanted to open up a salad bar, so they brought in business people to assist them. This action served a need for the young people who wanted to improve the cafeteria (cuisine). This effort provided young people with relevant business-like experience.

"The students are excited and engaged in classroom learning when curriculum enhancers are used . . . parents seem to appreciate the synthesis of curriculum and future opportunity, and the teachers are reporting that the curriculum does seem to be

becoming more relevant, not only for the kids but for themselves," Mr. Bloomfield concluded.

These programs all attempt to give young people experience in the workplace or in workplace-like situations. Such experiences help young people to be confident about their capabilities.

This view is shared by the business community as well as career planning experts. Matthew J. Stover, president and chief executive officer, AGS Computers, a NYNEX Company, said, "The most important criterion in terms of what business is looking for relates to attitude; a commitment to themselves as individuals to progress, through good self-motivation."

All of these programs attempt to engender a positive attitude in young people, allowing them to realize the capabilities they have while showing them how their capabilities and interests can be used in a positive manner.

The discussion of these different programs highlighted the fact that successful career planning initiatives are being practiced across the nation. It was also evident that business leaders feel these initiatives can positively effect the quality of the American workforce.

Successful programs, however, are not receiving the attention they require or deserve. Such attention would allow a successful career planning initiative to serve as an example others could follow. Success often leads to further success, and this may be true for career planning initiatives; however, effective career planning initiatives cannot be models for future programs developed by the academic, business or military communities if they are not recognized for their effectiveness.

For this reason, the U.S. Army took the opportunity provided by the Forum to announce a nationwide career planning recognition program.

The U.S. Army Planning for Life Recognition Program

Maj. Gen. Jack C. Wheeler, commanding general, United States Army Recruiting Command, was the final Forum speaker. "Since career planning is such a vital aspect of how our youth perceive the relevance of school . . . the Army has decided to embark on a program to recognize excellence in career planning. Beginning in the summer of 1994, an Army Planning for Life Award Program will be conducted nationally and in each participating state, to recognize exemplary programs which demonstrate career planning excellence."

The goal of this recognition program is to involve all 50 states in the advancement of career planning. Awards will be presented at both the state and national level to recognize career planning initiatives that help young people plan to "Be All They Can Be."

The Army intends to use this program as an opportunity to help the business community and provide all young Americans a plan for a more promising future.

For more information on this program, contact:

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Conclusion

The Planning for Life Forum brought together leaders from many sectors to focus on a critical problem: America's need for more effective career planning programs.

The many Forum participants from varied sectors vowed to work toward a solution to this challenge through a spirit of cooperation.

The lack of career planning initiatives is a problem that merits immediate attention if our nation is to remain competitive in a global economy. Many attendees left the Forum with a renewed sense of purpose to advance the cause of career planning.

In discussing his impressions of the day's events, Gen. Wheeler said, "There is hardly a week that goes by when we do not see, read and hear about the fact that more jobs have left the shores of America and, if for no other reason, we are going to find ourselves looking at new ways of doing business, new ways of training the youth of tomorrow . . . in order to become increasingly competitive in a global economy."

Gen. Wheeler also discussed the broader role he felt the Army should play in society. "The Army today is recognized as a national resource for defense, something all of you paid for. It is also a dynamite resource for business, education and, indeed, for society . . . Our recruiters, acting today as role models, authority figures and in many cases mentors, have been encouraging young men and women for years to stay in school, stay off drugs and be all they can be. We need to add the encouragement of being all you can be while you are in school."

Perhaps Beverly J. O'Bryant, president of the American Counseling Association, put it best when she described the challenge before the Forum attendees: "We are talking about a common goal, a common purpose, and a common reason — that is providing appropriate education and experiences for our children so they can experience a life after us and be able to provide for those thereafter."

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